

Honoring the work of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) on behalf of veterans across America, Rep. Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) joined a bipartisan group of her colleagues in unanimously passing H.J.RES 80, recognizing the 65th anniversary of the BVA.

"For over six decades, the Blinded Veterans Association has stood up and been a voice for those who needed one the most, and a staunch advocate for those who have sacrificed so much for us," said Halvorson. "I am proud to stand beside the Blinded Veterans Association, and honor them on their 65th anniversary. As more men and women return from battlefields abroad, the work of their organization will be even more necessary. I look forward to working alongside them to fight for our veterans, and ensure they receive the benefits and recognition they deserve."

The Blinded Veterans Association was founded on March 28, 1945 by 100 blinded members of the Armed Forces who served in World War II. Since its founding, the BVA has been appointed as the first official representative for blinded veterans by the Veterans Administration, and has encouraged the blinded veterans it served, "to take their rightful place in the community with their fellow men and work with them toward the creation of a peaceful world."

"BVA is very grateful for Representative Halvorson's effort to acknowledge BVA's 65 years of service to America's blinded veterans and their families," said Tom Miller, Executive Director of the Blinded Veterans Association. "Because of the pride our membership has in the organization's long history and its many significant accomplishments, we appreciate the recognition so eloquently expressed in the Congressional Resolution Ms. Halvorson has introduced."

As the only member from Illinois on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Congresswoman Halvorson has been a strong advocate for veterans and veterans' organizations. In her first year in office, Halvorson introduced and passed legislation establishing a National American Legion Day, and has also fought for several pieces of legislation aimed at helping wounded veterans and military families, including the Families of Disabled Veterans Work Opportunity Act, HR 3908, and the Wounded Warrior Caregiver Assistance Act, HR 2898.

A transcript of Congresswoman Halvorson's remarks in support of the resolution can be found below.

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*Congressman Bob Filner, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs*

I rise in support of House Joint Resolution 80, recognizing and honoring the Blinded Veterans Association on its 65th anniversary of recognizing blinded veterans and their families, sponsored by Ms. Halvorson of Illinois.

Ms. Halvorson as a first term member has been incredibly active and committed to veterans on our committee and I would yield to the Gentlelady from Illinois to further explain the bill.

*Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson*

Thank you, Chairman Filner for yielding

It was truly a privilege to introduce H. J. Res. 80, which recognizes and honors the Blinded Veterans Association on its 65th anniversary.

Madam Speaker, This simple resolution helps to honor the service and sacrifice of the more than 165,000 blind or visually impaired veterans.

The resolution helps us to remember that on March 28, 1945, 100 blinded members of the Armed Forces who served in World War II formed the Blinded Veterans Association in order to help veterans and their families meet and overcome the challenges of blindness.

The following year, in 1946, General Omar Bradley, of the Veterans Administration, appointed the BVA as the first official representative for blinded veterans for the filing of claims and appeals to the Veterans Administration.

This made the Blinded Veterans Association only the eighth veterans' service organization to receive such distinction and responsibility.

In 1958 Congress followed General Bradley's lead and echoed his recognition of the BVA by officially approving the BVA Congressional Charter.

Since that time, the BVA has encouraged and assisted blinded veterans "to take their rightful place in the community with their fellow men and work with them toward the creation of a peaceful world"

Their leadership continues to advocate for the war-blinded to regain independence, confidence, and self esteem through rehabilitation and training.

Almost 13 percent of the evacuated wounded service members in Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered a serious eye injury of one type or another.

This means the BVA's services are just as crucial today as they were 65 years ago.

H. J. Res. 80 recognizes the extraordinary members and work of the BVA, and the good that they do for America's visually impaired veterans.

I thank the members of the BVA for their service and strongly encourage my colleagues to do the same by voting in favor of this resolution.

I thank the Chairman and yield the balance of my time.